

The lies of *Free Inquiry*—a response

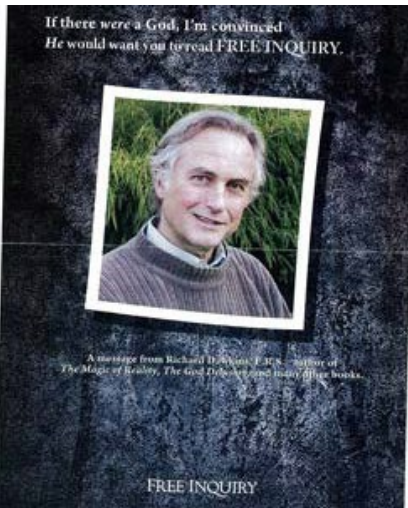
‘Bold and Brave’ atheist publication shows no morality

by Gary Bates, Lita Cosner, and Jonathan Sarfati

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Often, our readers send in various atheist publications or promotions, hoping that we will answer them. In reality, there are so many that we are rarely able to do so in detail. However, when a supporter sent in a *Free Inquiry* promotion, with a note telling us it was sent to his mother, who has Alzheimer’s and lives in a nursing home for the elderly, we decided this warranted an exception. So, we are bringing it to your attention to highlight how aggressive the ‘new atheists’ are becoming.

Free Inquiry magazine claims to be the largest humanist publication in the English language, and features contributors such as Richard Dawkins, and the late Christopher Hitchens. As you read on you will see that they are going to attempt to take the high moral ground, but right off the bat their promotional material boasts that it is “blasphemous, sacrilegious, irreverent, impious, godless, profane, sinful” and then adds “(sounds like something you would enjoy, doesn’t it?)”. So much for their own warped version of what they think is ‘good’. They say that *Free Inquiry* is “the magazine religious fuddy-duddies are afraid of and don’t want you to read.” Their publication is, in their words, “bold and brave”—though mailing their advertizing to Christian little old ladies in nursing homes does not exactly match that self-awarded accolade.



Moreover, if they had any real concern for others, why would they not allow the elderly, who might only have a few good years left, to feel some comfort in their belief in God and that there is something to look forward to after this life? After all, the atheists don’t believe in an afterlife, so what difference does it make what someone believes? If their aim is to eradicate religion, these elderly folks in nursing homes are hardly the ones to be targeted. That is, they are most likely not ‘on the streets’ evangelizing others.

The mailing features a letter from Richard Dawkins, claiming that “If there *were* a God, I’m convinced *He* would want you to read *Free Inquiry*.” He elaborates:

Just for a moment, imagine that there really is a supreme being who created all things, including the human race. Would he (or she or it) give you such a highly developed brain and then punish you for using it?

...

He would be committed to the application of reason and encourage scientific discovery and the cultivation of moral excellence. He would want us to be more concerned about living a valuable life than enforcing arbitrary rules to avoid a vindictive punishment in an afterlife.

And in my opinion, he would undoubtedly want you to read *Free Inquiry*. Why? Because let’s face it ... a guy that smart wouldn’t want to spend eternity with anyone dull enough to blindly believe in him!

So maybe, just maybe, *Free Inquiry* is your ticket to salvation ...

Elements of the mailing such as the above seemed to be geared toward the believer who may harbor doubts. Preying on confused and doubting believers, and moreover, claiming that this is what God would want them to do—that doesn’t sound “bold and brave” to us!

Mind you, Dawkins is right about one thing: God does expect us to use our minds that He gave us—see Loving God with all your mind: logic and creation—and a major part of CMI’s ministry is equipping Christians to do just that. We also encourage science—indeed, a Christian world view led to modern science, while it was stillborn in other cultures.

The mailing includes a list of questions that their publication covers, designed to invoke emotion and doubt in the mind of the reader. We’ll deal with them individually.

Although atheists claim to be rational free thinkers, they are actually being very inconsistent with their worldview.

Can you lead an ethical life without believing in a Creator?

We have never said that all atheists are immoral people. Rather, we argue that atheism does not, and cannot, provide the logical basis for their morality. That is, the conclusions “you should do X” and “you should not do Y” cannot logically be deduced from the atheist’s premise, “God does not exist.”

Although atheists claim to be rational free thinkers, they are actually being very inconsistent with their worldview. Dawkins himself showed this glaring inconsistency when he claimed to be “a passionate Darwinian when it comes to science, when it comes to explaining the world, but ... a passionate anti-Darwinian when it comes to morality and politics. If humans have risen to the top of the evolutionary tree, because we endured the dog-eat-dog, survival of the fittest environment over millions of years, then any form of morality or altruism would actually be counter to one’s evolutionary worldview.

This just highlights the fact that living under a *consistent* atheistic worldview, Darwinian morality would be horrific—a world where the strong prevailed over the weak. In fact, one of the worst genocidal evolutionists in history, Adolf Hitler, actually did take his evolutionary beliefs to their logical extension, by killing tens of thousands of handicapped people who were deemed unfit by his regime. And indeed, atheist dictators killed more in the 20th century than died in all recorded wars in all the previous centuries. See also ‘Christian’ vs evolutionary atrocities. Interestingly, the old lady with Alzheimer’s disease would be disposed of under a regime like Hitler’s. And Dawkins, as well as some of the other New Atheists, has shown a sympathetic bent to some of Hitler’s ideas. See Dawkins and Eugenics.

A moral atheist must borrow his morality from the Judeo-Christian culture. See our articles [Can we be good without God?](#) and [Bomb-building vs. the biblical foundation](#). As Dawkins himself admits>:

“There are no Christians, as far as I know, blowing up buildings. I am not aware of any Christian suicide bombers. I am not aware of any major Christian denomination that believes the penalty for apostasy is death. I have mixed feelings about the decline of Christianity, in so far as Christianity might be a bulwark against something worse.”

It’s notable that ardent atheist and ‘ethicist’ Peter Singer is a staunch advocate of euthanasia for patients with Alzheimer’s (as well as infanticide and bestiality), but made an exception for his own mother. That is, he applied the Judeo-Christian ethic ‘honor your father and mother’ rather than his usual evolutionary ‘ethic’.

Are church-goers actually more giving and charitable?

Free Inquiry claims that Christians are not more charitable than atheists. But let’s have a look at actual research from a Hoover Institute study:

Religious people are 25 percentage points more likely than secularists to donate money (91 percent to 66 percent) and 23 points more likely to volunteer time (67 percent to 44 percent). And, consistent with the findings of other writers, these data show that practicing a religion is more important than the actual religion itself in predicting charitable behavior. For example, among those who attend worship services regularly, 92 percent of Protestants give charitably, compared with 91 percent of Catholics, 91 percent of Jews, and 89 percent from other religions.

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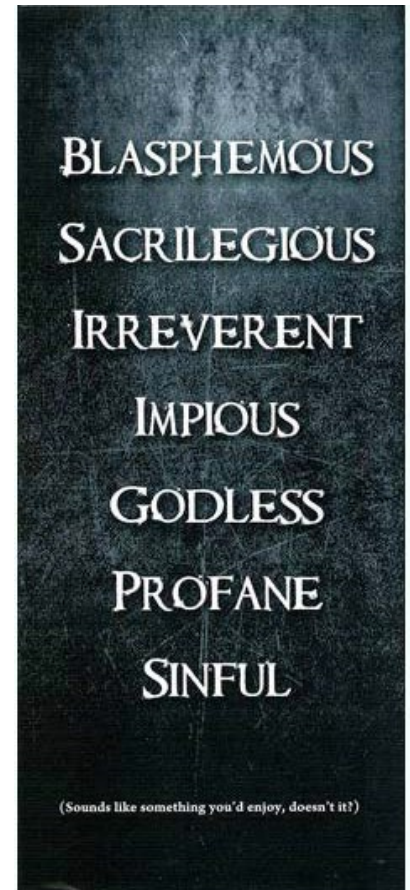
The data show that if two people—one religious and the other secular—are identical in every other way, the secular person is 23 percentage points less likely to give than the religious person and 26 points less likely to volunteer.

The author of this study, Prof. Arthur Brooks, later wrote a book about his research, *Who Really Cares?* He found that conservatives donate about 30% more than liberals, despite having lower incomes. They also donate more time, and are even 18% more likely to donate blood. Indeed, if liberals and moderates gave blood at the same rate as conservatives, the US blood supply would increase by 45%. (Brooks uses “liberal” and “conservative” in the American political sense, but his study shows that religious people were much more likely to donate to charity, and when they did, it was four times more. See also [helping the needy—with Creation?](#) [Surprising research facts about who really helps the poor.](#))

This is an example of ‘Never let the facts get in the way of a good story.’ Then again, if one is just evolved pond scum and there is no Creator or ultimate authority to be accountable to, then what’s the problem with lying if the end justifies the means? (See also [Evolutionist: it’s OK to deceive students to believe evolution.](#))

Did Mother Teresa really let her parents suffer in the name of God?

Anyone who has followed the late atheist Christopher Hitchens’ writing knows about his disdain for Mother Teresa. But we were unable to find any details to support their claims outside of Hitchens’ writings (many others have parroted what he wrote, of course). It is possible that Mother Teresa behaved badly in any number of ways (as much as one may admire her dedication to the



poorest of the poor, she was still *human*, after all), but the shortcomings of a professed believer do not prove that Christianity itself is false. Their example could easily be turned back on them; it's like saying because Hitler was an evolutionist, every evolutionist must be a genocidal maniac.

In fact, if any Christian acts in an unchristian manner, then that Christian would be acting inconsistently according to their belief system, but such actions would not necessarily falsify the belief system. See The Haggard tragedy: 'Christianity must be wrong because of all the hypocrites in the church!'

But based on the atheists' own belief system, how can they define what is good/moral or not except what they pick and choose for themselves? And moreover, why do they even care? If their claim about Mother Teresa is correct, wasn't she doing them a favor and actually acting more in accordance with an evolutionist's worldview? We are sure it would be very easy to find fault with many of the world's charitable organizations. It seems to be only too convenient for these atheists in targeting one that claims to do its works under the banner of Christianity.

The only reason some atheist can point the finger at anyone else is because he was raised in an environment where such concepts prevailed—and these concepts came from the Scriptures in the first place.

We suggest that the prevailing concept of morality in the Western world is primarily composed of Christian virtues that come from the Bible, and which grew under a Christian worldview, i.e. "Love your neighbor as yourself." In other words, the only reason some atheist can point the finger at anyone else is because he was raised in an environment where such concepts prevailed—and these concepts came from the Scriptures in the first place. Most of our moral codes and laws today had their origins in the Bible's teaching about such things. See Biblical Christianity is the basis for Western Law and Freedom and the contrast, by the same author, who is a legal scholar, The Darwinian roots of the Nazi legal system.

One of us (GB) gave an example of the atheists' own hypocrisy during the Haiti earthquake tragedy in January 2010. In recent years, atheists have been stung by comments that show they have no logical basis for their morality. So Executive Director of the Skeptics Society, Michael Shermer, said:

"It's all well and good to say that we nonbelievers are just as moral as believers (we are, but that's a philosophical point)—actions count more than words and real donations are where the theoretical rubber meets the practical road. *This is our time to pony up and show the world our true character.*" (Emphasis ours).

Note that Shermer's motivation was not necessarily to help the struggling Haitians, it was to show the world that atheists can be good too. The Lord Jesus had something to say about giving in such a way. He said:

"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the **hypocrites** do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" 6:2–4, emphasis ours).

Shermer was being a complete hypocrite. Christians should give based on the recognition that all people everywhere are human beings made in the image of God—displaying the same love and compassion that God had for us when He came to this earth to rescue us.

British politician and author Roy Hattersley had this comment to make about the Salvation Army:

"... it remains a vibrant organization because of its convictions. I'm an atheist. But I can only look with amazement at the devotion of the Salvation Army workers. I've been out with them on the streets and the way they work amongst the people, the most deprived and disadvantaged and sometimes pretty repugnant characters. I don't believe they would do that were it not for the religious impulse. And I often say I never hear of atheist organizations taking food to the poor. You don't hear of 'Atheist Aid' rather like Christian aid, and, I think, despite my inability to believe for myself, I'm deeply impressed by what belief does for people like the Salvation Army."

In his classic treatise, *One Human Family*, Carl Wieland highlighted the failure of atheist aid organizations and their hypocrisy in publicizing their 'good works'. He wrote:

"Other atheists, seemingly 'stung' by the increase in similar comments over the years, have launched their own charitable organizations, but mostly these just highlight the contrast. In preparing this book, I googled 'atheist aid', and the website www.atheistaid.org.uk popped up prominently. Under the heading "Compassion without Religion", it stated on the front page (12 October 2010):

'This site highlights current charity work and philanthropy by atheists and agnostics. Please mail me if you'd like to publicize your good works.'

"The rest of the page had two entries, one highlighting the Haiti Appeal by Richard Dawkins' foundation and listing a good number of atheist groups that had declared their support for it. The other was an atheist writing in to tell of how she and other atheists were helping edit a book, *The Atheist's Guide to Christmas*, in aid of an HIV charity.

"That's it. There was nothing else on the site. When I checked again on 19 July 2011, it seemed to have gone defunct."

Is there anything about Christmas that's genuinely Christian?

Well, yes, but what does it matter anyway? The truth of Christianity depends on the historical facts of the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ, not on Christmas traditions. Many alleged pagan parallels are either nothing of the kind, or actually post-date Christianity, so were borrowed *from* Christianity. See *Was Christianity plagiarized from pagan myths? Refuting the copycat thesis and Copycat copout: Jesus was not made up from pagan myths*. But let's take a few common claims:

December 25th

There is no evidence of a 25 December date for Mithraic mysteries, as liberal theologians once asserted. There *was* a 25 December date for *Sol Invictus*, or 'Unconquered Sun', but this did not specifically pertain to Mithraism, which had no unique public festivals. Furthermore, like the alleged Mithraic parallels, this celebration *post-dates* Christian celebrations of the same date. Observation of this date by Christians goes back at least as far as AD 202 by Hippolytus of Rome in his *Commentary on Daniel*:

"For the first advent of our Lord in the flesh, when he was born in Bethlehem, eight days before the kalends of January [December 25th], the 4th day of the week [Wednesday], while Augustus was in his forty-second year, [2 or 3BC] but from Adam five thousand and five hundred years. He suffered in the thirty third year, 8 days before the kalends of April [March 25th], the Day of Preparation, the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar [29 or 30 AD], while Rufus and Roubellion and Gaius Caesar, for the 4th time, and Gaius Cestius Saturninus were Consuls."

But it wasn't until AD 274, 72 years later, that Roman Emperor Aurelian proclaimed a celebration of *Sol Invictus*, and there is no clear evidence that such a celebration on this date actually took place until AD 354. One article, "Calculating Christmas", concludes:

"Thus, December 25th as the date of the Christ's birth appears to owe nothing whatsoever to pagan influences upon the practice of the Church during or after Constantine's time. It is wholly unlikely to have been the actual date of Christ's birth, but it arose entirely from the efforts of early Latin Christians to determine the historical date of Christ's death.

"And the pagan feast which the Emperor Aurelian instituted on that date in the year 274 was not only an effort to use the winter solstice to make a political statement, but also almost certainly an attempt to give a pagan significance to a date already of importance to Roman Christians. The Christians, in turn, could at a later date re-appropriate the pagan 'Birth of the Unconquered Sun' to refer, on the occasion of the birth of Christ, to the rising of the 'Sun of Salvation' or the 'Sun of Justice.'⁵

So clearly the pagan date is the *counterfeit*, not the original. The *real* source of the 25 December date is an extra-biblical *Jewish* tradition, called the 'integral year'. This means that a prophet's lifespan would be an exact number of years, so he would die on an anniversary of his conception, the real beginning of life. Jesus' death was calculated as March 25th by the Western church, and April 6th by the Eastern Church. Therefore this same date was celebrated as the date Christ was conceived. Nine months later is December 25th or January 6th, and the latter date is still celebrated in the Eastern Orthodox church (and many branches of the Western church celebrate 'Epiphany' on the same day, now to commemorate the arrival of the magi and their three gifts).

CMI doesn't say that Christ was born on this day (we doubt that it's possible to know for sure), or what we should or should not do then. But we do say that many common arguments against this date are fallacious (see Christmas and Genesis). And as shown above, the claim that the 25 December date stems from paganism is totally lacking in historical foundation.

Santa Claus

It's often overlooked, but Saint Nicholas is a real historical figure. He was known for his generosity. Hanging stockings comes from an instance where he gave some girls money for their dowry by putting it in their stockings, which were drying by the fireplace. Of course, the mythology that has grown around this figure and the associated rampant commercialization distracts from any remembrance of the Savior's birth.

Gift-giving

This originated from both the gifts of the Magi and from Saint Nicholas.

Yule log

A modern tradition that has no origin in either Christianity or paganism—it never had any specific religious significance, pagan or otherwise. It was simply a festive decoration with a practical purpose.

Christmas tree

This is also a modern innovation that has no origin in either Christianity or Paganism. There is no evidence of this earlier than the 15th century, in what is now Estonia. Then in the next century, Christians in what is now northern Germany performed mystery plays with an evergreen "Paradise tree" hung with apples, and one apple was plucked. December 24 was a traditional "name day" for Adam and Eve. We can appreciate this <http://creation.com/christmas-and-genesis> link of Christmas to the Fall, which is the whole reason Jesus came to die, according to the New Testament (see 1 Corinthians 15, for example) .

The Christmas tree was introduced to England by Queen Victoria's German consort, Prince Albert. In fact, many of what we think of as ancient Christmas traditions began in Victorian England only a little over a century ago!

Did priests and ministers really conspire with Hitler before WWII?

Once again, even if true, how do the actions of a few individuals falsify Christianity or make it an invalid belief system?

*However, the usual charge is about the Reichskonkordat between the Third Reich and the Catholic Church under Pope Pius XII (1876–1958). While CMI is not Roman Catholic, we find that the book *The Myth of Hitler's Pope* by Rabbi David Dalin argues convincingly that “the concordat was a pragmatic and morally defensible diplomatic measure to protect German Catholics and the relative freedom of the Catholic Church in Germany.” Dalin also provides incontrovertible proof of pro-Semitism in the Roman Catholic Church, and that Pius saved far more Jews than Oskar Schindler—Jewish historian Pinchas Lapide argued that Pius “was instrumental in saving at least 700,000, but probably as many as 860,000 Jews from certain death at Nazi hands”, compared to the 1200 on ‘Schindler’s List’. See also *The Darwin Hitler connection*.*

*In any case, Hitler hijacked churches by stacking them with his own priests and pastors, and invoked the name of God in his speeches and writings, although he was clearly not a believer. This even led to a disgracefully anti-Semitic and anti-Christian butchering of the Bible (see *Did Hitler rewrite the Bible?*). This was so that he could fool many Christians into believing that he was actually on their side. But at the same time he secretly killed real Christians or threw them into the concentration camps, including the Christian White Rose resistance movement that came out of University campuses in Germany. Led by Sophie Scholl, who is a modern-day hero in Germany, these Christians actively campaigned against the Nazis and became martyrs in the process when they were guillotined for their beliefs.*

*Also, see our review of *The Swastika against the Cross*, which shows how true Christians were persecuted under Hitler. Furthermore, during the Nuremberg trials of leading Nazis, Prosecutor William Donovan documented copious evidence that the Nazi regime planned to wipe out Christianity (see *Nazis planned to exterminate Christianity*).*

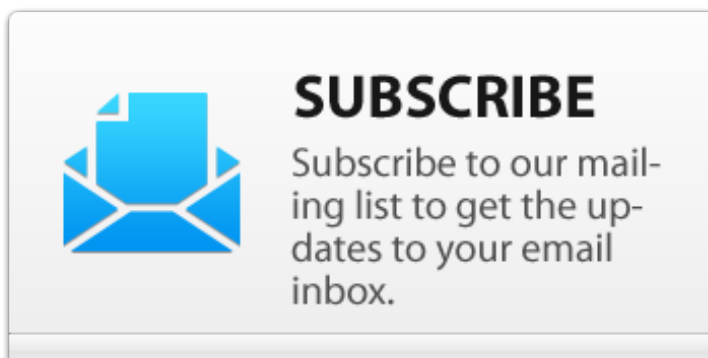
Summary

If you look at these Free Inquiry arguments objectively, they are particularly weak—many are merely abusive ad hominem arguments. If this is the best they can do, then it really demonstrates the logical weakness of their own belief system.

Unfortunately, most people who receive this sort of mailing won't have the motivation or resources to challenge these statements. And of course, by sending them to nursing homes, they are picking on the more vulnerable ones. The nature of the advertisement is such that they can just throw the assertions out there without the supporting data, to invoke the idea that ‘Where's there's smoke there's fire’. That's a really nice tactic if you are the one blowing all the smoke! Their hope is, of course, that one will shell out the money for a subscription to get the supporting information. That seems disingenuous at the very least.

So, why not forward (see the email button at the top of the page) this article to others to show the weakness of the atheists' arguments? Print this out for your church family so they can be prepared with answers, and meet the challenge head on. You might need to visit your local nursing home too, and deliver a few copies!

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